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ABSTRACT

This guide for parents of children with disabilities in Alberta (Canada) focuses on the role of the parent on the educational team. Part 1 describes the rights of parents, the responsibilities of parents, and where parents can go for information and help. Part 2 discusses schools as partners, including information for parents on how to procure services if they believe their child has a disability. The assessment process and the individualized program plan are explained and ways to determine the most appropriate educational placement for a child are discussed. The availability of health-related support services for students with health needs is also addressed. Part 3 explains the process for dispute resolution and appeals. Parents are provided guidance on what to do if their child's unique special needs cannot be met in any program in the school jurisdiction. Part 4 provides information on special education funding, including basic instruction funding, severe disabilities funding, and Early Childhood Services program unit funding. Appendices include tips for parents on individualized program plans, transitions, a review of relevant legislation, a list of provincial parent support and advocacy groups, and a list of Alberta education policy documents and resources. (CR)

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An Information Booklet for Parents of Children with Special Needs

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Alberta Education
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Partners During Changing Times

An Information Booklet
for Parents of Children with Special Needs

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This document is intended for:

Students	
Teachers	
Administrators	
Parents	✓
General Public	
Other	

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- College of Alberta School Superintendents
- Special Education Branch, Alberta Education.

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- Alberta Associations for Bright Children
- Alberta Association for Community Living
- Alberta Home and School Councils' Association
- Alberta School Boards Association
- Alberta Teachers' Association
- Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Alberta Federation
- Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta
- Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities
- University of Alberta, Department of Educational Psychology.

Introduction

Parents play an important role in the education of their children, especially parents of children who have special education needs. Provincial and local regulations require parents to be involved in specific areas in the development of an educational program for their children. Throughout your child's school years, there is a need to communicate with teachers, administrators and others involved in your child's education. There are also times when the school needs to communicate with you, as the parent. To have meaningful input into the educational process, you need to be part of the educational team. You must have the knowledge to make informed decisions that address the specific needs and capabilities of your child.

Partners During Changing Times presents a general overview of how parents can become part of the educational team. Part I of the booklet outlines the roles and responsibilities of parents as partners in education. The school's rights and responsibilities are provided in Part II. Part III describes the legal parameters, of interest to parents, that are related to the education of students with special needs in Alberta. Funding sources to support delivery of programs and services are outlined in Part IV.

You are encouraged to use this information to enhance your role as partners on the educational team. The information provided is not exhaustive. You are encouraged to seek additional information from as many sources as possible to continue meeting the diverse needs of your child.

This resource was produced for parents by the Special Education Branch of Alberta Education and the College of Alberta School Superintendents.

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Part I
Parents as Partners

What are your rights as parents?

You have a right to:

- be involved in the decisions affecting your child's education
- give written consent for any formal evaluations to be conducted
- be consulted before your child is placed in a special education program
- ask for a report on your child's progress during the school year
- access the information in your child's school files
- access information on your child from teachers, principals and board administration
- be fully informed of the school's programs
- appeal placement decisions that you do not agree with
- be an informed member of your child's educational team.

What are your responsibilities as parents?

Your responsibilities include becoming effective team members. In order to be effective team members, it is helpful to help establish ongoing communication between your home and the school, and to share information about your child's education and specific needs with other members of the team. Responding quickly to school letters, notes, memos and requests greatly assists school staff in their work with your child.

Additional responsibilities vary considerably depending on the nature of the child's special needs and other factors. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Have ongoing, open communication with the teacher and the school.
- Share relevant updated information about your child's development, home experiences and daily behaviours. Your observations and suggestions can be a valuable resource to aid your child's progress.
- Provide information about your child's medical and developmental progress. Update this information when necessary.
- Ask for clarification of any aspect of the program that is unclear.
- Learn as much as you can about the school and school jurisdiction's policies and regulations.
- Gain information on program options available for your child within the school jurisdiction.

How involved should you be?

The extent of your involvement is at your discretion. Opportunities for involvement range from helping with learning activities at home, to direct participation in school activities, planning and decision making on the school council. Parents are welcome volunteers and can help teachers in various capacities ranging from clerical work, to directly assisting students' learning. Assisting with field trips, helping a student to read or practise mathematical facts, assisting with money skills or travel training skills while at home are examples of how parents can become involved. See Appendix A, pages 14–19 for Transitions: Suggestions for Parents.

Volunteers within schools must follow school procedures and agree to abide by the confidentiality guidelines of the school.

Where can you go for information and help?

Your local school or school jurisdiction can refer you to community agencies and resource people within the school and community. There are also parent support and advocacy groups available to assist parents by providing information and advice. These organizations may help with planning, decision making, problem solving and sorting through issues related to the education of students with special needs. Some parent support and advocacy groups are listed in Appendix C, page 21. Any student may benefit from support groups from time to time. Check for additional groups in your community.

Part II
Schools as Partners

What should you do if you think your child has a special need or requires a special service?

If you are concerned that your child may have special needs, talk to your child's teacher. The teacher has a number of informal ways to assess your child. They include:

- observations
- analysis of the child's work
- review of the child's portfolio
- consultation with the child
- screening tests
- questionnaires.

The teacher, in consultation with parents, may then decide that more formal assessment is required. Some schools have staff who are qualified in formal assessment procedures. If staff are not readily available at the school, the student is referred to qualified persons outside the school for assessment. Each school jurisdiction has different assessment procedures and can provide parents with information regarding the sequence of steps to be taken for assessment referrals.

Parents can also gather information that may be useful in the assessment process. This information may include recent behavioural changes, medical reports, etc.

What if school staff request an assessment?

A request for formal assessment can also be made by school staff. When school staff request an assessment, they must provide a written explanation and obtain your consent. Once the referral is made, consultation and/or assessment should begin within four weeks of the date of referral, for program planning purposes.

Referring a student for assessment does not necessarily mean the student has a special need. It may simply be an indication that the student is having developmental challenges at a particular time and may require short-term assistance.

What might the assessment include?

Assessments may deal with the student's intellectual, social, emotional, communication and/or behavioural development. The student's development may be assessed in one area or in various combinations to produce a comprehensive profile of his or her overall development.

How are the assessment results used?

The results of informal and formal assessments conducted by the teacher or other specialists are first used by the school jurisdiction to determine if the student is in need of special education or related services. The school should contact you to explain the assessment results, discuss the reports and involve you in any related decisions.

If the results indicate that the student requires special education support or an individualized program plan (IPP), the school jurisdiction should establish a student support team, involving the parents, teachers, the student (when possible) and appropriate others; e.g., social worker or teaching assistant, to review the information and develop an IPP for the student.

What exactly is an IPP and what is your role, as parents?

An IPP:

- is a mandatory requirement of Alberta Education for each student identified as having special needs
- is a written agreement by an educational team
- is meant to ensure the provision of appropriate programming for students with special needs
- establishes learning goals for your child
- states the special education and related services the school will provide for your child
- describes:
  - what the student now knows and is capable of doing
  - what and how the student should learn next
  - where the instruction will take place
  - who will provide it
  - how long it may take
  - what the student will do to demonstrate learning.

Parents, teachers, school administrators and others involved with the student work together in preparing the IPP. Often the student is involved as well. You are asked to sign the IPP indicating that you understand and agree with it. (See Appendix A, page 13 for IPP tips.)

Reviews of the IPP are conducted regularly to discuss your child's progress and possible revisions to the program. Reviews are usually requested if the student has met one or several of the goals earlier than expected or if the student does not seem to be making any progress towards the goals established. Additional services may be added if your child experiences major changes in such areas as health, behaviour and/or learning. You can request a review of your child's IPP if you believe changes are necessary. Contact the school if you have concerns about the IPP.

How do you determine the most appropriate educational placement for your child?

In many cases, the regular classroom is viewed as the most appropriate placement because of increased opportunities for the student with special needs to participate with same-aged peers. However, other placements might be considered more appropriate for students with complex or severe learning and/or behavioural needs, including the gifted and talented.

Assessment results are used to determine a suitable placement, programs or supports for the student. Ultimately, the school jurisdiction is responsible for placement, however placement decisions are usually made by the principal in consultation with school staff, parents and where appropriate, the student.

When determining placement, consider:

- What environment best meets the overall educational needs of your child?
- What is best for all students in the classroom and school?

School jurisdictions should be able to provide alternative placement options so that every student with special needs has an appropriate program. An appropriate program is one that is challenging, yet geared to the student's needs, capabilities and interests with provisions made for any support and resources required by the student and teacher.

Parents are encouraged to visit available programs and schools with their child to discuss future placement options with each school principal. The school jurisdiction's central office can provide the names of possible programs, schools and contact persons.

What if your child requires health-related support services during the school day?

Each school jurisdiction has policies, insurance and written procedures regarding the provision of health-related support services for students with special needs. Decisions regarding the provision of such services may depend on whether the service is characterized as essentially educational; for example, academic or behavioural, or medical; e.g., physiotherapy or catheterization. If the service is medical, the local health authority may be required to provide the service during the school day. Parents, school staff and the local health authority need to work together to meet the medical needs of the student during the school day.

If school staff assist in the provision of health-related support services, parents and appropriate health professionals must provide written authorization for staff providing the medical service. School authorities must also ensure that staff are provided appropriate training by health professionals or other trained individuals, including parents, in administering health-related support services.

If the service is the ongoing administration of medicine, then the appropriate health care professionals and parents must provide the following to school staff: written permission containing information on the dosage, reason for use, possible side effects, storage and administration for each type of medication. The medication must be provided in the original containers. This information may be included in the student's IPP along with the procedures for providing each health-related service.

School jurisdictions can access the services of local health authorities to address prevention and wellness programs for students and staff. Contact your local health authority to obtain further information.

How can you help your child move from one school level to the next?

For students to receive the services they need, service-providers need to work together at both provincial and local levels. Increasingly, school authorities are working together with members of the community to improve services at the local level.

Moving a student from one school level to the next, one school to another or from school into the adult world is called transition. The key to smooth transitions is early planning by the parents and the school prior to the move. Such preparation ensures that the student's programs and services continue to be appropriate.

As parents, there are many things you can do to make the transition process easier. If your child is in elementary school, you can find out what programs are offered in junior high schools in your community. If your child is in high school, you can look for options to consider after graduation. (See Appendix A, pages 14–19 for questions and suggestions for transitions.)

It is important to consider any support services your child requires when planning a move. Transition meetings should take place early in the calendar year, in time to prepare for recommendations for services before school budgets are prepared. Deadlines and information required to access the needed support services for students with special needs can be obtained from the school principal or school jurisdiction office. School staff can provide information about community service agencies which may provide further advice on educational or employment options. Staff members may be able to accompany you as you visit the programs to consider their appropriateness.

What happens if you disagree with what the school is proposing for your child?

The overall goal is to provide an appropriate education for your child. There are many opinions on what is an appropriate education and ongoing planning may be necessary to develop a successful program for every student.

When you function as collaborative partners in the school system, you become aware of jurisdiction capabilities and limitations, including fiscal and personnel constraints. This knowledge allows you to work more effectively with school staff to make decisions. However, in cases where family and school disagree, it is important for both parties to meet to discuss their concerns and come to an agreement in the best interests of the student. It is important to share any concerns with the teacher. The school principal is also available to meet with you and answer your questions.

If you and staff members continue to disagree, you may want to ask for the name of someone in the local school jurisdiction office who can meet with everyone to further discuss the matter. Parent support and advocacy groups can be contacted for information and advice. Some groups are listed in Appendix C, page 21.

When parents and school staff cannot agree on issues such as identification, evaluation, placement or programs, processes for dispute resolution and more formal appeal procedures are available. If, after sincere attempts have been made, the parents and school staff are unable to agree, then parents should contact the local school board office for assistance and advice on what to do next. The following section contains additional information on resolving disputes with schools and school jurisdictions.

Part III
Dispute Resolutions and Appeals

What are the procedures to resolving disputes?

Most disputes can and should be solved at the level where they arise. Establishing good communication early can often prevent an issue from arising. It is important that issues and disputes are addressed and solved at the school level first, using the resources the school offers.

Step 1

When an issue turns into an ongoing dispute, ask for a formal meeting with the teacher and the school principal. At the meeting, present your reasons for calling the meeting and state the action you would like taken. Together with the teacher and the principal, you should be able to solve most problems that affect your child at school. However, if the issue is not resolved, ask who you can talk to at the school jurisdiction level. This should be the person with responsibility for all students with special needs for the school jurisdiction. Parent support and advocacy groups and community organizations can provide parents with advice and support during these procedures. (See Appendix C, page 21.)

Step 2

- Write a letter to the person responsible requesting a meeting and include any relevant documentation. This will assist the jurisdiction office in investigating the matter prior to meeting. This allows everyone to focus valuable time and energy on resolving the dispute rather than focusing on the case history and background information.

Step 3

- If you are still not satisfied, the next person to hear your case should be the Superintendent of Schools or designate. When meeting with the Superintendent, follow the same procedure as before. If you are unable to reach an agreement after meeting with the Superintendent, you have the right to appeal the Superintendent's decision to the school board. Any administrative decision can be appealed to the board. Ask for a copy of the board's appeal procedures.

These above steps are referred to as the "local appeal procedure." All school boards are required to have a local appeal procedure. The steps may vary from school board to school board, but generally they follow the same process. The local appeal procedure may be used to solve special education placement problems or any problem that significantly affects the education of your child. Your school board office can provide you with a copy of the board's local appeal procedures.

If the dispute is not solvable at the school level or by school system administration, an unbiased third party can be brought in to help clarify the issue and arrive at a course of action. This is called mediation. The third person must be acceptable to both parties and will help both sides try to find common ground for a solution. Parent support and advocacy groups and community organizations can provide parents with advice and support during these procedures. (See Appendix C, page 21.) Before appealing the decision of the school board, you should make a request for a mediator to one of these groups or to the Special Education Branch of Alberta Education (Telephone 403–422–6326). Mediation is not mandatory, nor is a mediated solution binding on either party.

How can you appeal a decision of the school board?

Step 4

- The next stage of an appeal process is formalizing your concerns to the school board using section 103 of the *School Act*[1]. This is done by writing to the school board and asking for a hearing by the board or by the board's appeal committee. At this meeting, you will have the opportunity to present your case to the board's appeal committee. The board will notify you of the time and place of the meeting when it receives your letter requesting an appeal hearing.

When will the Minister of Education become involved in the appeal procedure?

If mediation and the local board appeal procedure fail to solve the problem, you may apply in writing to the Minister of Education for a review of the board decision. The Minister's decision is final. Parents may choose to pursue the matter further through the courts.

The appeal to the board must be completed before the Minister of Education will review the board decision. The Minister of Education may decide to review a board decision if it falls under placement in a special education program (section 104 of the *School Act*). A Ministerial Review is time consuming and costly. Therefore, prior to any review, the Minister may ask you and the school board to try one more time to solve the problem locally.

Step 5

If the Minister decides to review the matter, the Minister will:

- name a Review Committee to assist in the process
- notify you about the terms, conditions, procedures and timelines for the review
- request written submissions for consideration by the Review Committee.

[1] A copy of the *School Act* t is available from Queen's Printer Bookstores in Edmonton at (403) 427–4952 or in Calgary at (403) 297–6251

The Review Committee will:

- share its findings with you and the board
- hear any additional information and any disagreements you may have with the facts as presented
- prepare a report and recommendations for the Minister of Education.

The Minister will:

- make a decision
- contact you by letter about the decision.

What if your child's unique special needs cannot be met in any program in your school jurisdiction?

If a school board decides that a student has special needs that cannot be met in any education program that the board provides, or to which the board can direct the student, the board may refer the matter to a Special Needs Tribunal (section 30 of the *School Act*). The tribunal's goal is to identify an appropriate program for the student. It will also identify the agencies which will provide the program and it will assign the costs of the program between the board and the government.

Some students who require a Special Needs Tribunal are severely medically fragile. These are students who may require resuscitation by a nurse several times a day, or who may need intravenous or gastrostomy feeding, or they may have a number of physical disabilities. Some have severe behaviour needs and some may have a combination of physical and mental needs that require intensive support services. The combined needs are severe enough that the student requires full or part-time assistance by a person other than a teacher or teaching assistant.

When such needs are severe enough, a school board may feel that its programs cannot serve the student adequately or safely. However, every individual who, at September 1 of a year, is six years of age or older and younger than 19 years of age is entitled to an educational program. Once the Special Needs Tribunal has heard all aspects of the case, it will prepare a written report and a ruling on the program to be offered. The ruling of the tribunal is binding on all parties. The decisions of the tribunal are reviewed every three years or as directed by the tribunal. The Minister of Education, upon written request, may review the decisions of a tribunal.

Part IV
Special Education Funding

How does the funding structure for special education work?

Alberta Education provides funding to assist school jurisdictions in providing programs and services required by students with special needs. Local school boards make the decisions regarding the allocation of funds and are held accountable for the provision and allocation of funds to schools. With school-based decision making, the final funding decisions may be made at the school by the principal and staff.

Basic Instruction Funding

- Every school board receives the same amount of funding per student for basic instruction.
- Basic Instruction Funding includes special education funding for students with mild and moderate disabilities, and who are gifted and talented.

Schools boards and schools are expected to use a portion of the basic instruction funding plus any additional funding received for students with special needs to provide appropriate programs and services for all students with special needs.

Severe Disabilities Funding:

- is available to school boards and approved private schools for each student with severe disabilities who fits the definition and who is provided a program in accordance with an individualized program plan (IPP)
- provides for some additional costs of staff, learning resources and some equipment associated with programs for students with severe disabilities.

ECS Program Unit Funding:

- is available for children with severe disabilities who on September 1, are at least two years, six months, but younger than six years old
- is available for a maximum of three years and is designed to provide continuous support up to Grade 1
- can be obtained by approved operators of an Early Childhood Services (ECS) Program.

If your child will be two years, six months old on or before September 1st and has severe or multiple special needs, contact your local school jurisdiction office or local private ECS operator to determine if your child qualifies for Program Unit Funding.

Funding for special education is included in the Basic Instruction Funding every student receives. Additional funding is available for students with severe needs. These funds are often pooled by school jurisdictions and allocated to schools to provide programs and supports for all students with special needs.

If you have any questions about funding for students with special needs, please contact your local school jurisdiction or the Special Education Branch at (403) 422–6326.

Appendix A
Tips for Parents

Individualized Program Plans

General Tips

Parents are valuable members of the IPP team. The following tips may enhance your participation in your child's educational program:

- ❑ maintain ongoing contact with the school
- ❑ take an active role in decision making
- ❑ ask about other parents who may be in a similar situation; they can be a valuable resource
- ❑ ask about the services and resources available.

Tips for Participating in the IPP Process

Before the meeting:

- ❑ find out in advance what the agenda is
- ❑ discuss your child's involvement in the process
- ❑ jot down your comments and questions in advance
- ❑ think about your goals and expectations for your child.

At the meeting:

- ❑ make time limits known if you have other commitments
- ❑ provide samples of your child's work done at home if you think they could be useful
- ❑ ask questions if anything is unclear to you
- ❑ ask how you can help achieve some of these goals at home.

NOTES

Transitions: Suggestions for Parents

WHAT IS TRANSITION PLANNING?

Transition Planning is a collaborative planning and implementation process for quality post-secondary education, employment and residential opportunities for young adults with intellectual disabilities. These are students who, although may not achieve the traditional level in academic subjects, can make good use of community-based educational, vocational and residential programs.

The plan should reflect the individual's priorities and lifestyle choices for the future. It should address goals in the areas of post-secondary program (vocational or educational), residential living situation, accessing community services, and recreation and leisure activities.

A well thought-out Transition Plan is a crucial stage in the continuous service delivery for on-going supports and fosters the individual's successful participation in the community.

Transition from school to work and adult support systems can be a very difficult and confusing time for individuals with disabilities and their families. A coordinated Transition Plan that begins well before graduation can ensure that students have vocational, residential and other services in place before they make this move. This type of planning helps reduce the fear associated with leaving school.

Ross is a young man, twenty-one years old, who has a mental disability. He shares a duplex with two room-mates and is enrolled in a community-based job training program. Ross visits with his family often, and is very happy with his life. But all this did not happen overnight. Ross's lifestyle is the result of careful planning that started well in advance of his graduating from school.

Five Steps in Transition Planning*

A. Determine the family's realistic wishes and preferences
   1) Expect dreams to come true.
   2) Develop a family vision for the future.

B. Explore options
   1) Be informed about the possibilities; ask critical questions.
   2) Evaluate how options meet needs.

C. Evaluate son/daughter's skills and family resources
   1) Be willing to do some soul searching.
   2) Consider the risks and costs.

D. Decide on future programs
   1) Take responsibility for hard decisions.
   2) Provide direction to the team.

E. Make applications for programs early!
   1) Be active and don't wait.
   2) Be persistent and ask for help.

*Adapted from Brotherson, M.J. et.al. (1986). *Transition to Adulthood*, in Summer, J.A. (Ed.) **The Right to Grow Up: An Introduction to Adults with DD** (pp. 17 - 44). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

WHEN TO START A TRANSITION PLAN?

Informal planning for your child's future should begin at an early age. Formal Transition Planning should begin 3 to 4 years prior to graduation. This may seem premature, but many agencies and adult services have long waiting lists, and to avoid gaps in service, plans must be made well ahead of time.

Early planning gives parents and their son or daughter time to become familiar with available services and how the "service system" works. The student's Individualized Program Plan (IPP), the planning document used by the teachers and parents, identifies key areas of the child's schooling. During this time, parents can benefit also from support groups, workshops and visits or tours of specific agencies. Focusing on the future options while still in school ensures that all persons involved are working towards the same goals.

As a parent or guardian of a child with a disability, there are many things you can do while he/she is still in school to make the eventual transition process easier. Here are some suggestions:*

Elementary school-aged children:

- become aware of your child's eventual need to enter the work force. Speak positively about working and supporting oneself.
- be sure your child's Individualized Program Plan (IPP) addresses employment awareness.
- be aware of work experience opportunities available in the higher grades.
- point out workers to your child when you are out in the community. Discuss what that worker is doing and encourage your child to think about what job he or she might like to have.
- give your child specific responsibilities around the house. Insist that he/she perform all duties thoroughly and on time. Consider giving your child an allowance for completing duties.
- emphasize physical fitness and appropriate use of play time.
- encourage your child to dress and groom appropriately.
- Provide strong positive reinforcement for even the smallest task completed.
- find out about services available to adults with disabilities in your community. Also learn about "state of the art" vocational and residential options available in other areas and compare these to options in your area.

* Adapted from Moon S.M., Beale A.V. (1984). *Vocational Training and employment: Guideline for Parents*, **Exceptional Parent**, December, pp.35-38.

Junior high school-aged students:

- actively support the school's efforts to provide work experiences.
- see that your child's IPP addresses work skills, and functional social and community access skills that are taught in a variety of settings.
- start meeting adult service providers to explore what options will be available for your child.
- find work for your child to do during vacations, weekends, and after school outside the home.
- continue to work with your child on appearance, health maintenance and physical fitness.
- teach your child to budget money and to use banking facilities by providing a small allowance or pay for performing certain jobs.
- take your child to movies, restaurants, etc.
- let your child help with the grocery shopping, choose his or her own clothes and make other decisions.
- continue to discuss the importance and benefits of working and earning wages.
- get your child involved in community-based leisure activities and, if possible, teach him/her to use the public transportation system.
- make sure that community-based work experience is available in the high school program your child will enter.

Ross's foster mother began thinking about what Ross was going to do in the future when he turned 18. Ross applied for A.I.S.H. and the process started. At his teachers' suggestion, Ross and and his mother began looking toward graduation. They attended information sessions to find out what services were available. The options were discussed with Ross, who expressed his desire to get a job and move out on his own. At this point, Ross's mother was ready to begin planning, visiting some agencies and fillng out applications.

High school-aged students:

- make sure that transitional planning is an active part of the school program.
- meet with teachers, social workers and others involved in your child's life to formulate a plan.
- encourage the school to place your child in a variety of work settings during the high school years.
- make sure that appropriate services are in place before he/she graduates (educational, vocational and/or residential).
- continue to work with your child on matters of appearance, grooming, physical fitness, budgeting, completing chores, maintaining schedules, and use of community-based facilities.
- encourage independence and ample opportunities for community involvement.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING PROCESS?

Each student has unique needs and will interact with different people. Therefore the make-up of each Transition Planning "team" will also be different. Usually, following the teacher's initiative, everyone who plays a significant part in an individuals life will be involved in the plan. Typically included are family members, teachers, other school personnel, social workers, speech, occupational and/or physical therapists, and of course, the individual.

Once the team is formed, defining roles and responsibilities is a crucial prerequisite for a smooth planning process. Roles will vary depending on the number of people involved in the planning process, and the amount of involvement of each party. Here are some examples of how the team works.

The individual

- should always be an active part of the planning process.
- should attend meetings, voice concerns.
- should contribute ideas and preferences as to where to live, what kind of work interests him or her, and what to do during leisure time.

Families/Caregivers

- are important contributors because of their continuous contact with the individual.
- need to let others know what degree they wish to participate in the planning process.
- should attend meetings, voice concerns and preferences.
- provide input into the individual's and family needs.
- explore available service options.
- visit agencies that seem suitable.
- select the best possible placement.
- provide informal home and community training.

Ross's planning continued with his teacher, his social worker, his foster mother and Ross himself, getting together and discussing the different options available. Responsiblities were divided among the planning team members, who also set up some timelines. The teachers helped Ross in his application for vocational placement; the social worker began looking into Ross's new living arrangements; Ross and his foster mother looked for potential roommates and residential staff.

Teachers/Counsellors

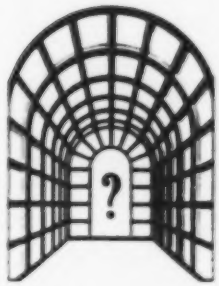
- generally initiate the transition process and coordinate the development of the plan.
- prepare students for adult opportunities by providing a functional and community-based school program.
- make parents aware of alternatives available to son/daughter upon graduation.
- provide parents with information about what to look for in an agency and how to compare services.
- encourage family members to participate.
- identify referral needs and ensure that referrals are made.

Client Services Worker/Social Worker

- attend meetings (especially important during last 2 years of the individual's school program).
- provide information about agencies and services to families and others.
- assist families with Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (A.I.S.H.), guardianship and trusteeship issues.
- provide information and assistance with the development of Individualized Service Plans.
- share the responsibility of referrals.
- accompany families/caregivers on agency visits.
- provide follow-up once the individual has graduated from school.

Everything was in place by the time Ross fininshed high school. He moved out over the summer, and began his training the following September. The key to his successful transition was careful planning, started well in advance of the anticipated move.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK?



- Will this agency meet my son/daughter's needs?
- What is the agency's philosophy and is it similar to mine and my son/daughter's?
- Is the agency committed to community-based programs?
- What is the criteria for admission?
- Is there a waiting list? if so, how long?
- What qualification/education do the service providers have?
- To what extent are parents/family members involved in the service delivery?
- How long does follow-up/support of the vocational agencies last?
- What costs or fees are involved?
- What disciplinary action or consequences do they utilize?

WHO DO I CONTACT FOR INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE?

- **Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (A.I.S.H.)**
  This service is designed for individuals who have no other sources of income.

  Edmonton (403) 482–9664

  Calgary (403) 541–6311

or call you local district office of Family and Social Services.

- **Public Guardian Office**
  Pursuant to the Dependent Adult Act, provides a legal guardian for adults who are unable to care for themselves and make reasonable judgments about personal matters.

  Edmonton (403) 427–0017

  Calgary (403) 381–5648

Public Trustee Office
Provides administration of estates of mentally incapacitated persons who have been declared by the courts incapable of managing their financial affairs.

Edmonton (403) 427–2744

Calgary (403) 297–6541

Also, contact your local Office of Services for Persons with Disabilities, Personal Community Support Assocation, Family and Social Services, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and Alberta Special Olympics.

Appendix B
School Act Reference Sections

Parents should be aware of the following important sections of the *School Act*. The sections referenced below pertain to students with special needs. The *School Act* is available at a nominal cost from Queen's Printer Bookstores in Edmonton (403) 427–4952 and Calgary (403) 297–6251.

Interpretations:

Section 1(1)(h)	Defines "independent student"
Section 1(3)	Defines entitlements of an independent student
Section 1(2)	Defines "parent" under the Act

Student:

Section 3	Who has the right of access to education
Section 4	Language of instruction — English
Section 5	Language of instruction — French
Section 6	Other languages of instruction
Section 7	Student code of conduct
Section 8	Compulsory education requirements
Section 9	Legal authority to enforce school attendance
Section 10	Referral of non-attendance matters to an Attendance Board
Section 11	Liability on students and parents for damage to board property
Section 18	Student Records

School Boards Providing Educational & Associated Services:

Section 27	Resident student definition
Section 28	School board responsibility to provide education to students
Section 29	School board responsibility to provide special education programming to a student with special needs
Section 30	Special Needs Tribunal
Section 32	Tuition fees charged by a board
Section 34	Transportation of students
Section 35	Transportation agreement with a parent

Operation & Management:

Section 43	Powers of separate school boards
Section 44	Powers of school boards
Section 54	Open nature of meetings of board
Section 59	Public inspection of board documents
Section 60.2	Accountability of board

Appeals:

Section 103	Appeals by parents or students to board
Section 104	Appeals by parents or students to the Minister of Education

Appendix C
Provincial Parent Support and Advocacy Groups

Aboriginal Disabilities Society of Alberta
Box 3955
Spruce Grove, AB T7X 3B2
Telephone: (403) 962–6184

Alberta Associations for Bright Children
Room 1280, 6240 – 113 Street
Edmonton, AB T6H 3L2
Telephone: (403) 413–1630
Rite: 310–0000, ask for 422–0362

Alberta Association for Community Living
11724 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5
Telephone: (403) 451–3055
1–800–252–7556

Alberta Association for the
Dependent Handicapped
Box 1353, Main Post Office
Edmonton, AB T5J 2N2
Telephone: (403) 481–8294

Alberta Association for the Deaf
Box 1133
Edmonton, AB T5J 2M1
TTY: (403) 436–2599

Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities
707 Princeton Place
10339 – 124 Street
Edmonton, AB T5N 3W1
Telephone: (403) 488–9088

Alberta Education, Special Education Branch
10th Floor, East Devonian Building
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 0L2
Telephone: (403) 422–6326

Alberta Home and School Councils' Association
Suite 102, 12310 – 105 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5N 0Y4
Telephone: (403) 454–9867
1–800–661–3470

Alberta Society for Visually Impaired
Box 72063, Ottewell Post Office
Edmonton, AB T6B 3A7
Telephone (403) 962–8128

Alberta Teachers' Association
Special Education Council
11010 – 142 Street
Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1
Telephone: (403) 453–2411

Autism Society of Alberta
101 – 11720 Kingsway
Edmonton, AB. T5G 0X5
Telephone: (403) 453–3971

Canadian Council of the Blind
69 Grand Meadow Cres.
Edmonton, AB T6L 1A3
Telephone: (403) 462–8879

Learning Disabilities Association
145, 11343 – 61 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T6H 1M3
Telephone: (403) 448–0360

Appendix D
Alberta Education Policies

For more information on Alberta Education policies, see the *Alberta Education Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual*. Your local school jurisdiction office should have a copy of the manual. Copies of the policies are available from the Resource Development Unit of the Special Education Branch, Alberta Education (403) 422–6326. The following policies are especially relevant to special education.

Policy No.	
1.6.1	Educational Placement of Students with Exceptional Needs
1.6.2	Special Education
3.5.1	Review by the Minister
3.5.2	Special Needs Tribunal
1.8.1	Services for Students and Children

For definitions of special needs, contact the Special Education Branch at (403) 422–6326.

Appendix E
Alberta Education Resources

Alberta Education, Special Education Branch References

Guide to Education for Students with Special Needs (1995). Available at no cost from the Special Education Branch of Alberta Education.

Individualized Program Plans (1995). Available for $7.55 + GST from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

Special Education Branch Resources (annual). Available at no cost from the Special Education Branch of Alberta Education.

Transition Planning for Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities: a Resource Guide for Families, Teachers and Counsellors (1992). Available at no cost from the Special Education Branch of Alberta Education. (This document is included on pages 14–19.)

From Position to Program: Building A Comprehensive School Guidance and Counselling Program: Planning and Resource Guide (1995). Available for $18.90 + GST from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

To order these documents, contact:

Special Education Branch
10th Floor, East Tower, Devonian Building
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2
Telephone: (403) 422–6326
Fax: (403) 422–2039

Customer Service and Sales
Learning Resources Distributing Centre
12360 – 142 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5L 4X9
Telephone: (403) 427–5775
Fax: (403) 422–9750

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